

Miscellany of medical, magical, and alchemical recipes; JOHN OF RUPESCISSA [JEAN DE ROQUETAILLADE], *Liber lucis*; alchemical notes, with extracts from *Turba philosophorum*, GIOVANNI AGOSTINO PANTEO, *Voarchadumia contra alchimiam*, PSEUDO-GEBER, *Summa perfectionis magisterii*, the redaction of *Secretum secretorum* by ROGER BACON, and PS.-ARNOLD OF VILLANOVA, *Rosarius philosophorum*
In Italian and Latin, decorated manuscript on paper
Central Italy (Urbino?), c. 1520-1540

57 folios on paper, watermarks similar to Briquet no. 492, "Ancre": Lucca, 1522, Provence, 1536; Briquet no. 495, "Ancre": Prague, 1539/46, Lucca, 1540-45, Narbonne, 1579; Briquet no. 6305, "Flèche": Florence, 1524-25, 1529-30, Fabriano, 1528; Briquet no. 748, "Arbalète": Rome, 1505; Briquet no. 760, "Arbalète": Florence, 1523, Viktring (Carinthia), 1524, Lucca, 1526/28, Fabriano, 1526, modern foliation in pencil, upper outer recto, 1-57 (collation i⁴ [two quires added at the center of this quire, one of eight leaves (ff. 23-30) and one of four (ff. 31-34), followed by one loose singleton (f. 35)]), layout varies, I. ff. 5-22v, 36-53v, ruling in lead point visible on some leaves, often with full-length vertical bounding lines, prickings for every horizontal ruling in inner and outer margins (justification 117-132 x 90-98 mm.), written in a slanted humanistic cursive script on fifteen to seventeen long lines, with additions in different ink but the same hand on ff. 18v-22v and 36-41v, II. ff. 23-34v, horizontal ruling in light brown crayon, with full-length vertical bounding lines ruled in hardpoint, two sets of prickings for every horizontal ruling in inner and outer margins (justification 115-117 x 80-84 mm.), written in a compact Gothic rotunda script with some humanistic forms on twenty-five long lines, with additions on ff. 32v-34v in the cursive hand from I, two- to three-line initials in brown ink, III. f. 35rv, no ruling, written in a mercantesca hand in long lines; recipes added on ff. 3, 54-55, 56v-57 in two large contemporary cursive hands, the second of which may be a more sprawling form of the cursive hand in I, some rubbing and staining with no loss of text, f. 35 has six horizontal folds, with splitting occurring along three.
CONTEMPORARY BINDING of limp parchment, with an upside-down inscription on the upper cover in faded brown ink, "Libro di [r]icette bone per li corpi humani et a[ltri?] rimedij boni per Cau[alli?]," staining and significant wear and losses due to worming along the lower half of the upper hinge and in much of the lower cover. Dimensions 148-153 x 113-115 mm.

In this remarkable Renaissance manuscript, arcane magical incantations and alchemical formulae lie concealed within a modest original binding whose inscription announces a compendium of medical recipes. At its center, John of Rupescissa's *Liber lucis*, a rarity on the market, details a recipe for the philosophers' stone. A testament to the confluence of Christian belief and superstition and of scientific and magical practice in sixteenth-century Italy, this book was probably compiled for use by a practitioner of alchemy and medicine.

PROVENANCE

1. This manuscript consists of an inner booklet, possibly copied as early as c. 1520, judging from evidence of script and watermarks, bound within a substantial outer quire that was copied by a single hand, likely over a period of time, c. 1520-1540, given fluctuations in script. The person who copied the outer quire was almost certainly the book's compiler, since he also made additions to the contents of the inner booklet. Internal evidence indicates that the outer part of the book could not have been completed before 1530, the date of publication for Giovanni Agostino Panteo's *Voarchadumia contra alchimiam* (an extract is found on f. 41v).

Evidence of script and watermarks further indicates that this book was produced in Italy, quite possibly in Urbino. There is reason to believe this manuscript was in Urbino by the late sixteenth century when it was owned by the Ubaldini family (see below), and at least some of the paper stock could have come from the paper mill at Fermignano (variants of two of the primary watermarks, dated to the sixteenth century, appear in Mariani, 1993, pp. 222-223), which would tend to point to the book's origins in Urbino as well (see Peruzzi, 1997, p. 119, n. 9).

2. Belonged to the Ubaldini family, in Urbino, possibly as early as the late sixteenth century. Andrea Aromatico – who has overseen two editions of texts within this manuscript (see Aromatico and Peruzzi, 1994; Aromatico, 1997) – discovered the volume in the Ubaldini library where it had long gone unremarked (see Aromatico, 1997, p. 11), and it may have belonged to the family for many centuries before this rediscovery; according to Marcella Peruzzi the late sixteenth-century inscription on the cover is typical of books collected by the Ubaldini family (1997, p. 116). Peruzzi suggests that belonging to such a prominent and powerful family may have helped save this manuscript from the Inquisition (1997, p. 117). Indeed, an influential member of the family in the fifteenth century, Ottaviano Ubaldini della Carda, the most trusted counselor of Federico da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino (1422-1482), was also a gifted and respected astrologer (and was later reputed to have used magic).

TEXT

[ff. 1-2v, blank]; f. 3, *Recetta per fare orinare*, incipit, "Piglia radice de boinache et lauale bene ... ne darai à beuere un bichieretto al patiente sin che ce ne sara et è prouato"; [ff. 3v-4v, blank];

A medical recipe (to aid urination), added in a contemporary hand; edited from this manuscript by Aromatico and Peruzzi (1994).

ff. 5-22v, *Vnguento per atachare nervi*, incipit, "Recipe erba gratia dej consolida maiore erba de taglio ... e loro sara saldo";

Ninety recipes, edited from this manuscript by Aromatico and Peruzzi (1994). Most of the recipes are for medical issues in humans and animals, ranging from a horse's *mal di mazuco* (an illness characterized by a bad cold, severe headache, catarrhal fever, and abundant secretion), to facilitating childbirth, to treating malaria, plague, poisoning, intestinal parasites, burns, pain, incontinence, cracked skin, and animal bites. Some cosmetic recipes are included here as well, including one to make a woman appear a virgin and several to beautify the face, and there is also a recipe to make muscatel (f. 13). Interspersed among these recipes are several Latin formulae for cursing enemies or causing them to contract deadly illnesses and for undoing curses or enchantments (see f. 12rv).

ff. 23-32v, *Ihesus Maria, Incipit liber fratris Jobannis de Ripasis* [sic] *qui liber Lucus* [sic] *nuncupatur*, incipit, "COsiderauī tribulationes electorum in sacrosancto euangelio prophetias [sic] a christo maxime tribulationes pre tempora [sic] antichristi ... perficiendum lunificum et solificum uerum secundum quod elixir extiterit preparatum, Laus deo ["omnipotenti" crossed out here] optimo

et gloriose virginis Marie, Amen. *Explicit liber lucis fratris Johannis de ripacissa gallici doctor [sic] parisiensis etc.*

John of Rupescissa wrote *Liber lucis*, an alchemical tract, around 1350. The text of this manuscript has been edited and translated into Italian by Peruzzi (1997). It was popular in the late Middle Ages; Robert Halleux has identified 55 manuscript copies, not including this one (see 1981, pp. 278-84). Two versions were printed in the sixteenth century: *Liber de Confectione Veri Lapidis Philosophorum* (Gratarolo, 1561), a shorter version, and *Liber Lucis* (Cologne, Daniel van Broekhuizen, 1579), a more complete one. The text of this manuscript resembles one or the other of these different print versions at different points and is sometimes distinct from both. Based on expressions and phrases present here, Peruzzi (1997) has suggested that the present text may have been revised to make it more accessible (though there are also places where the readings appear to have become confused as a result).

John of Rupescissa (c. 1310-1366), a Franciscan friar and alchemist, was notorious in and after his life for his apocalyptic prophecies on the coming of the Antichrist. He is celebrated now as the inventor of medical chemistry, an essential precursor of modern pharmacology (DeVun, 2009, p. 3). He was born near Aurillac, where he eventually entered a Franciscan house after studying at the University of Toulouse. He spent much of his life in prison, likely on account of his Spiritual Franciscan leanings, and was even declared mad by the papal court at Avignon. He did much of his writing in prison, but the survival of manuscripts preserving his work indicates that it must have circulated widely in spite of this.

John of Rupescissa's apocalyptic convictions and alchemical studies were closely intertwined in *Liber lucis*, as in his other written work. *Liber lucis* lays out in eight chapters, or *operationes*, a detailed recipe for making the philosophers' stone, an alchemical substance believed capable of turning base metals like lead into gold. John declares in the work's preface that he wrote it as a survival manual for the end times, stating that gold produced through alchemy would help people successfully endure the apocalyptic crisis he foresaw, as would the alchemical production of medicine, detailed in his other alchemical manual, *De consideratione quintae essentiae omnium rerum*.

ff. 32v-34v, *Per fare coppelle*, incipit, "Recipe cenere[?] de Carnj de Castratj abrusiatj ... et il tutto procedi in la ygna[?] et lanima[?] opera";

Two unedited alchemical recipes related to making precious metals, followed by related notes on alchemy, many of which may also be found throughout the *Turba philosophorum*, a Latin alchemical work translated from Arabic sources. The *coppella* of the first recipe is a vessel used to distinguish gold and silver from other metals.

f. 35rv, *Recepte da guarire Riciolj*, incipit, "Imprimis se volle farre per dui Jornj vno Impiastro de sogna ab soluta ... et vnto quatro volte o piu et guarira"; f. 35v [upside down], incipit, "A messer matheo de la branca o uero a octauiano suo nepote";

An inserted recipe for a healing poultice used to treat *ricioli*, a disease affecting the legs of horses, edited from this manuscript by Aromatico and Peruzzi (1994). The directions on the back and the folds on this loose leaf all suggest that before its inclusion in this volume this recipe was

folded and sent either to Messer Matheo de la Brancha, whose name is written on the back of the sheet, or his nephew Octaviano.

f. 36rv, *Nomj de filosofi*, incipit, "Geber, Alberto magno, Raimondo, Renaldo [sic] da uilla noua ... Luca, Jo[hannes] Augustinus panteus uenetus";

An unedited list of "philosophers," many of whom were alchemists or were, like Albertus Magnus, later reputed to be alchemists. The list ranges chronologically from Hippocrates, Socrates, and Plato to Giovanni Agostino Panteo (d. 1535), a Venetian priest and alchemist (see below, f. 41v).

ff. 37-41, incipit, "El manifesto e semper contrario ad oculto e lo ochulto ad manifesto ... Metron. Mineram. Neusin. Orientem. idem significat Undij[?];"

Unedited notes on alchemy interspersed with two alchemical recipes.

f. 41, *Per fare salciciotti bolognesi*, incipit, "Recipe libre 20 de Carne magra de vitello ... e once 3 intiegro e in pi[?] subito li budellj";

An unedited recipe for Bolognese sausage.

f. 41v, incipit, "Cum embrione reducit ... etiam materia ex qua omnia metalla ducunt originem";

A brief excerpt on the embryo from the *Voarchadumia contra alchimiam*, an alchemical work published in 1530 by Giovanni Agostino Panteo, who is listed above (see above, f. 36rv).

f. 42, incipit, "Et regimento consiste in la ygna e la ygna e comenzamento ... la vertu e possanza de questa revificatione";

A brief, unedited note on alchemy, in Italian.

ff. 42-46, *Operationes sunt 7[?]*, incipit, "Est enim lapis unum [sic] medicina unum [sic] in quo totum magisterium consistit ... con borace e solimato";

Unedited notes on alchemy, with excerpts from the *Summa perfectionis magisterii* of Pseudo-Geber (possibly Paul of Taranto, a thirteenth-century Franciscan alchemist) – one of the best-known alchemical texts in Western Europe at the end of the Middle Ages – Roger Bacon's redaction of the *Secretum secretorum*, and the *Rosarius philosophorum* attributed to Arnold of Villanova, among others.

ff. 46-53v, *Contra febre quartana*, incipit, "+ Tartar + Tartarum + Tartagitur contre mandole dallj vna per matina ... A cusi questa serita resanat sia. A dj 25 de gemmaro del 46. Vipera in Carcerauj de lunedì";

Thirty-five recipes, edited from this manuscript by Aromatico and Peruzzi (1994). Most of the recipes are for medical issues, including aids for childbirth and treatments for malaria, wounds, pain, intestinal parasites, and sciatica. There is also a recipe for making perfumes (f. 49v).

ff. 54-55, *Recepta contro li spasimo e contro il tossico*, incipit, "Recipe sterco de porco masch[io?] once 2 ... si ben pare che sia contrario per rispetto de la carne"; [ff. 55v-56, blank and still joined along the top];

Four recipes for medical issues (one to treat poisoning, two to stanch blood, and one to treat a weapon-inflicted wound); edited from this manuscript by Aromatico and Peruzzi (1994).

ff. 56v-57, *Rimedio per le orecchie quando fa remore e non ode*, incipit, "Recipe vna Cipolla e spachala e mettila a scaldare ... Et dica tri pater nostri e tri aue marie"; [f. 57v, blank].

Three recipes for medical issues (for difficulty hearing, hemorrhoids, and malaria); edited from this manuscript by Aromatico and Peruzzi (1994).

In the modern world we usually think of recipes as instructions for preparing food, but in the Middle Ages and well into the early modern era a "recipe" was understood in a much broader sense as a set of how-to instructions, usually brief, to make things related to various crafts or more generally useful in the household and agriculture. A wide-ranging collection of recipes – magical, medical, pharmaceutical, cosmetic, and even culinary – occupies the substantial outer sections of this manuscript. Enfolded within them is the alchemical heart of the volume, consisting of alchemical recipes and notes from a variety of sources, as well as the *Liber lucis*, an alchemical tract by John of Rupescissa.

While many of these recipes depend on pharmaceutical or other physical treatments, many also rely partially or entirely on prayers or on incantations, and other practices falling under the category of what Franco Cardini has termed "il magico cristiano" (1979, p. 99). This so-called Christian magic blended elements of Christian worship – including liturgy and prayers, the names of God, the Virgin Mary, angels, and saints, and holy water and consecrated hosts – with elements of folk magic. For example, a remedy for tooth pain (f. 18) calls for writing a series of words and syllables interspersed with crosses (eg. "+ Gibel + Got + Gabel +" and "+ Macha + be + us +" and "+ Tet[r]agrammaton +") and tracing these with a knife. Along with the clearly Christian features, present in both crosses and names, Aromatico and Peruzzi lay out the kabbalistic and alchemical aspects of this recipe as well (1994, pp. 213-214). In another instance of "Christian magic," several of the magical Latin formulae on f. 12rv also begin with phrases from the Psalms before turning, sometimes, in more malicious directions.

Especially by the sixteenth century, alchemical texts and their writers embraced secrecy and concealment. Authors wrote under pseudonyms of respected (and, crucially, deceased) figures like "Geber" (a Latinization of Abu Musa Jabir ibn Hayyan), an eighth-century chemist, and Arnold of Villanova, a thirteenth-century physician. Alchemical texts employed "cover-names," allegory, emblematic imagery, and Christian symbolism to encode alchemical secrets. This volume physically embodies this desire for secrecy, with the cover inscription and outer leaves all identifying it as a book of medical recipes for the good of human and equine bodies. As Peruzzi has noted, these outer layers of the book serve not only as a means of physically protecting and preserving the alchemical materials at its center, but as a means of concealing them as well (1997, p. 116).

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